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UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/49/304
9 August 1994
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: RUSSIAN

Forty-ninth session
Item 103 of the provisional agenda*

HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Letter dated 8 August 1994 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/155 of 20 December 1993, I have the honour to transmit the text of an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, A. V. Kozyrev, to the ministers for foreign affairs of the member States of CSCE and to executive heads of international organizations regarding the adoption of the Citizenship of the Latvian Republic Act (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 103 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Y. VORONTSOV

* A/49/150.

ANNEX

Address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation to the ministers for foreign affairs of the member States of CSCE and to executive heads of international organizations regarding the adoption of the Citizenship of the Latvian Republic Act

On 22 July the Parliament of Latvia adopted the Citizenship of the Latvian Republic Act. The minor amendments made to the text of the Act do not alter its manifestly discriminatory nature and the fact that it is pointedly directed against one third of the Latvian population, over half a million of whom are of Russian nationality.

In pursuit of the unrealistic aim of creating a homogeneous State "to save the dying Latvian nation", Latvian parliamentarians, representing by virtue of the discriminatory legislation prevailing in the country only a limited proportion of the permanent population, are in effect promoting a form of aggressive nationalism that is unreservedly condemned by the international community. They deliberately ignored the statements by the President, the Federal Assembly and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the appeals and recommendations of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the political leaders of European and American States.

The rule according to which one unlawful act begets another has been inexorably borne out. Presumptuously arrogating to themselves the right to act solely on behalf of the country's indigenous population and cynically refusing to defend the rights of the remaining so-called non-indigenous inhabitants, the Latvian authorities are again endeavouring to mislead the international community, presenting the case in such a way as to imply that no violations of human rights are occurring in Latvia. Under these circumstances, the deep concern felt by the Russian Federation and by international institutes and organizations for the defence of human rights at the blatant discrimination against Russians in Latvia and the flouting of their rights, their dignity and their interests can only intensify.

It can scarcely be termed a normal situation when grey-haired veterans who stayed on as residents in Latvia, counting on obtaining citizenship of a country that was far from foreign to them, have to wait in line until 2003 to undergo an examination of their right to citizenship while those who settled with their parents in Latvia as children have to wait some one or two years fewer, and this under threat of expulsion, a recurring refrain of the radical nationalists.

We cannot share the "deep satisfaction" in the face of such cynicism expressed by some Western figures who hastened to congratulate the Latvian legislators on "having adopted a European approach to society-building".

The adoption of the Citizenship of the Latvian Republic Act is a graphic example of how inconsistency and the application of double standards in the area

of human rights whet the appetite of the Baltic nationalists and give them a free hand.

People in the Russian Federation are concerned about the fate of their fellow Russians living in the territory of neighbouring Latvia. The recurrent efforts of the Latvian nationalists to assert themselves at the expense of those who have lived and worked alongside Latvians and whose only "fault" consists in being of a different ethnic origin cannot but be viewed as a blow to Latvia's recently restored statehood. The danger inherent in this kind of behaviour is obvious. Such a policy can only bring misfortune both to one's own and to neighbouring peoples.

The Russian Federation has no intention of seeking to instruct its neighbouring Baltic States. We are open to constructive dialogue on the unresolved problems in our relations with the countries concerned.

The Russian side stands by its contention that the right to citizenship of the Latvian Republic should be available to all its permanent residents on the basis of free choice. This is the only solution that fully complies with the spirit and the letter of modern principles in the area of human rights and fully responds to the aspirations of people whose life and fate are linked to Latvia.

Expressing our moral support for all ethnic Russians living in Latvia, we affirm our determination to defend our compatriots and their interests, honour and dignity through all means available under international law.

The Russian Federation is conscientiously fulfilling its obligations with respect to the withdrawal of troops from the territory of the Latvian Republic. As a result, what was viewed by many as the principal and virtually the only problem in our relations with that country is being solved.

The degree to which other States and international organizations are sincere and unambiguous in their approach to human rights issues can be gauged from how they react to the lawlessness in Latvia.